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Employment Standardization in the Public Service

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In the civil service of various municipalities efforts have been made during the last ten years to introduce a reasonable equality of pay for persons doing equal work and provide equal opportunities for promotion through careful classification of city positions according to character of work and degree of skill required, the purpose being to make public service more attractive to promising talent. The technique of such efforts is emerging and taking shape.

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EMPLOYMENT STANDARDIZATION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

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THE movement toward employment standardization in our public service has been gathering momentum and becoming increasingly significant during the last ten years. In the following pages an effort is made to review and in some measure to appraise the progress of this movement during the period just mentioned. The material that forms the basis of this review consists mainly of the reports on employment standardization that have been issued by various public bodies throughout the country. It consists also, however, of the supplementary literature on the subject, of letters from public officials and others describing the operation of standardization measures in their own localities, of interviews with specialists in the field of employment standardization, and of personal observation.

In order to make this review of greater value to the lay reader, it is preceded by a brief discussion of the underlying principles of employment standardization.

PRINCIPLES OF EMPLOYMENT STANDARDIZATION

Instead of making an abstract statement of these principles, let us assume a concrete situation and develop the essential principles involved as we proceed. The reader and the writer, we shall assume, are both public officials upon whom has fallen the responsibility for standardizing the service of a city government.

We shall not stop to picture the conditions in the service that call for correction. The inequalities of pay for similar work, the confusing multiplicity of meaningless titles, the lack of definite lines of promotion, and the demoralizing effect of these conditions upon the morale of the employes in the average municipal service are only too well known to require further description.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

After considering these conditions from various angles, we conclude quite properly that one of the basic needs of the service is a concrete application of the principle of equal pay for equal work. If two clerks, for example, are doing the same character and grade of work, it goes without saying that they should have the same pay. This is a matter of the most elementary justice.

WHAT IS EQUAL WORK?

But what is equal work? If the two clerks just mentioned are doing exactly the same kind of work, let us say addressing envelopes, we should decide quite readily that their work was equal. But let us suppose that we are dealing, not with two, but with two hundred clerical positions, scattered throughout a score of different offices and involving a multitude of different tasks. Under such circumstances it would not be so easy to determine equality of work and to

grade the positions accordingly. In fact, this cannot be done at all without some standard for measuring work. A standard of this character, moreover, is not easily devised and its application is not so simple as that of a standard of physical measurement, like the yard stick. Nevertheless it is possible to define a series of standard positions that mark the various grades in any vocational line of work so that the grade of any position in that vocational line can be determined by comparison with the standard positions.

Let us say, for example, that we are grading all positions in a municipal service involving bookkeeping work. After considering the range between the least important and the most important bookkeeping positions in the service, our first task would be to define a number of standard positions that would correspond to the various grades into which the bookkeeping work might properly be divided. Beginning with the lowest grade, we might define standard positions under the titles of junior bookkeeper, bookkeeper, and senior bookkeeper. Then we should compare the duties of each bookkeeping position in the service with these standard positions and place it in the same grade with the standard position that it most closely resembles. Thus, by following the axiom that "things equal to the same thing are equal to each other," we are able to determine what positions involve equal work and therefore should carry with them equal pay.

NEED OF STANDARDS OF COMPENSATION

After the question of equal work has been settled, it seems at first like a very simple matter to determine the question of equal pay. It is not so simple, however, as it seems.

Let us suppose again that of our two clerks one is receiving $1,200 a year and the other $1,800 a year. We propose to equalize their salaries. How shall we go about it? Shall we pay both clerks $1,200 a year, or shall we pay both $1,800; or shall we decide upon some third figure? Obviously if these clerks are to be treated at all fairly we must be guided by some standard of adequacy. That standard may be determined either by the current market value of the services rendered, or by the cost of maintaining a given standard of living, or by a modification of either or both of these two methods. The essential point is that some standard of adequacy must be used in the process of equalization.

THEORY OF THE RANGE OF COMPENSATION

Let us suppose again that of the two clerks mentioned above one has been in his position for a number of years and has attained a high degree of efficiency in performing his duties, whereas the other, while having exactly the same kind of work to do, is still a novice in his job and consequently not as efficient as his colleague. In this case absolute equalization of pay would not be fair to the more experienced worker. It would not, in fact, be equal pay for equal work, but equal pay for work that is essentially unequal because of the manner in which it is performed. Justice to both workers, therefore, would require a lower rate for the one and a higher rate for the other, even though their duties may be exactly the same. In order to give recognition to this difference in the value of services rendered by different persons in similar positions, our standard of compensation should allow for some variation of rates within certain fixed limits. Instead of a

standard flat rate there should be, for any given class and grade of work, a standard *range of compensation* providing standard minimum, maximum and intermediate rates. This is not an alteration but rather a refinement of the principle of equal pay for equal work, for it takes into account not only the nature of the work but also the manner in which it is performed.

NEED OF STANDARD QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT

Having arrived at this point in our standardization program, we should be short-sighted indeed if we did not perceive the next logical step to be taken. Equal pay for equal work must be followed by equal minimum qualifications for appointment. If, for example, an elementary course in bookkeeping is properly required for appointment to one position involving the duties of junior bookkeeper, it is purely a matter of fairness and of common sense that an elementary course in bookkeeping should be required for appointment to all other positions involving the duties of junior bookkeeper. We, therefore, prescribe for each standard position the minimum qualifications that applicants should possess to be eligible for appointment to that position.

OPENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREERS

In standardizing personal service, however, it is not enough to achieve simply a static equality in conditions of employment. The work of any organization ought to be planned in such a manner that it will offer, not merely jobs, but careers to those entering its service. In other words, the process of standardization ought to establish definite avenues of promotion. Each standard position in a vocational group ought to serve as a natural stepping stone to the next higher position in that group, and with every advance in position there should go a corresponding advance in pay. This feature of standardization brings about the necessity of *classifying the service along vocational lines*, a task not so easy as it may appear on the surface. In a large organization the work of employes is likely to be highly specialized, whereas in a small one the individual worker's scope of duties is usually much broader. In a large office, for example, we might find the clerical work performed by three distinct groups of specialists—stenographers, bookkeepers, and clerks. On the other hand, it is not at all uncommon in a smaller office to find a single person employed in the combined capacity of stenographer, bookkeeper, and clerk, simply because there is not sufficient work to keep three specialists fully occupied. That these conditions have a vital bearing upon the problem of classification is obvious. Where the service is highly specialized the classification may follow very narrow vocational lines, such as those of stenography, bookkeeping, typing, and clerking. Where it is not so highly specialized the classification must be made along broader lines. A suitable plan of classification can be determined only after a careful survey of the service to be standardized.

GAUGING THE PERSONAL EQUATION

Finally, it is desirable in standardizing employment to provide means of gauging the personal equation. If we are going to recognize a difference in the value of the services rendered by different workers in similar positions, we should have a way of measuring this difference. For example, if we determine that the salary scale for a junior clerkship shall be $1,200 to

$1,560 per year, with $1,320 and $1,440 as intermediate rates, it is necessary to devise some standard that will guide us in applying these different rates to different individuals. In other words, assuming as we must that a new appointee would always begin at the lowest rate because of his lack of familiarity with the duties of his position, we need a standard method of advancing employes from lower to higher rates of pay. A standard of this character may consist merely of length of service, the person having served longest in the position being accorded the highest rate of pay. Again, it may consist of the relative efficiency of the individuals concerned, as shown by a system of efficiency records. It may also consist of a combination of both of the foregoing methods.

Once a standard of this kind has been devised, it may be used not only in determining the specific rate of pay that is fair for each individual doing the work of a given position, but also as a factor in determining promotion from a lower to a higher grade position. Let us say that Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith are both junior clerks and are also both candidates for promotion to senior clerks. Other things being equal, if Mr. Jones has a better efficiency record than Mr. Smith, preference in promotion ought to be given to Mr. Jones. The record of efficiency, however, ought not to be the only factor in promotions from lower to higher grade positions, for the higher grade positions usually call for a higher order of ability which can be determined only by a test of capacity. Hence it is a growing practice in the civil service to give a competitive examination to applicants for promotion, thus taking into account their capacity for more responsible work as well as their record in the work they have been performing in the past.

SUMMARY

At this point let us stop for a brief recapitulation. The basic principle with which we started was that of equal pay for equal work. We found that in order to apply this principle intelligently and fairly it is necessary:

1. To define a series of standard positions designated by standard titles by comparison with which it may be possible to determine what positions in the service involve equal work.

2. To determine upon some standard of compensation, such as the current market value of the services under consideration, the cost of maintaining a given standard of living, or a modification of either or both of these standards.

3. To establish for each standard position a range of compensation, rather than a flat rate of pay, so that the efficiency and the length of service of individual employes may be taken into account as well as the character of their duties.

4. To prescribe standard qualifications for each standard position.

5. To classify all positions along vocational lines in order to establish definite avenues of promotion and thus afford to employes an opportunity for a career in the public service.

6. To determine upon some standard method, based either upon efficiency or upon length of service or upon both, of advancing employes from the lower to the higher rates of pay within a given range of compensation.

In the language of the specialist in employment standardization, the standard titles, definitions of duties, qualifications for appointment, and rates of compensation applying to the various standard positions have come to be spoken of as "standard specifications of personal service."

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDIZATION IN PRACTICE

It will be of interest now to observe the actual practice of employment standardization. Our field of observation will include sixteen governmental jurisdictions which have undertaken standardization programs and have reached the stage of issuing a report on their work. Listed in chronological order as determined chiefly by the dates of the formal reports, these governmental jurisdictions are as follows: Chicago, 1911; Oakland, California, 1915; Los Angeles County, California, 1915; Pittsburgh, 1915; New York State, 1916; New York City, 1916; Seattle, 1917; Ohio, 1917; Milwaukee City, 1917; New Jersey, 1917; Cleveland, 1917; Akron, Ohio, 1917; Milwaukee County, 1917; St. Louis, 1918; Massachusetts, 1918; Dominion of Canada, 1919. In addition to this list, occasional reference may be made to the standardization work now in progress in the federal civil service and in Philadelphia.

BY WHAT AGENCIES UNDERTAKEN

First of all let us inquire by what agencies standardization programs have been undertaken. The practice in this matter has varied. One is not surprised to learn, however, that no agency has played so conspicuous a part in standardization work as the employment department of government, the civil service commission. It was largely through this agency that Chicago, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Milwaukee City and Milwaukee County, Cleveland, Los Angeles County, Oakland, the states of New Jersey and Ohio, and the government of the Dominion of Canada undertook their various programs. The initial work on standardization in the Chicago city service was done by a "Municipal Efficiency Commission" on which the Civil Service Commission was represented, but after two years of experience the Civil Service Commission assumed all of the functions of the Municipal Efficiency Commission. In some cases where the civil service commission has become the standardization agency it has proceeded to do the work with its own staff, but in other cases it has retained outside consultants for the purpose. The latter course has been followed by the civil service commissions of Oakland, Milwaukee City, Milwaukee County, Cleveland, the state of New Jersey, and the Dominion of Canada.

In two instances an administrative agency other than the civil service commission has been used. New York City created the Bureau of Standards, later known as the Bureau of Personal Service, under the jurisdiction of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment for the specific task of standardizing city employments. Massachusetts designated the Supervisor of Administration for a similar undertaking.

The method of designating a legislative committee to do the work of standardization has been adopted in several cases. In New York State the senate committee on civil service was authorized by the legislature to conduct an inquiry into the conditions of employment in the state service and to make constructive recommendations. In the federal government a Joint Congressional Commission on Reclassification was appointed with similar authority. A slight variation of the same plan was adopted in Akron, Ohio, where the legislative body charged a special committee of its membership with the duty of standardizing the city service and requested the mayor and the local bureau of municipal research, a citizens' agency, to assist the committee.

In Seattle the work was done by a special commission appointed by the mayor and consisting of "a member of the City Council, a member of the Civil Service Commission, a member of the Board of Public Works, an employe of the City under Civil Service, a representative of the labor organizations, a representative of the civic organizations and a representative of the business interests of the city."

It is difficult to judge from the results achieved which of these different methods is best. In the last analysis very much depends upon the local situation. The best method in one city might not be the best method in another city. As a general proposition, however, it may be asserted that unless there *are* peculiar local conditions that make a different course advisable, it is best to charge the civil service commission with the responsibility of developing the standardization program. If the commission is wise, it will devise means of keeping in close touch with the legislative body, the executive officials, and the employes, upon whose co-operation it must depend to put the standardization plan into effect.

CHARACTER OF THE CLASSIFICATIONS ADOPTED

The second item of interest is the character of the classifications adopted. We may distinguish at once between two general types of classifications which, for convenience, we shall call the Chicago type and the New York type, because of the origin of the former in Chicago and the first distinct formulation of the latter in New York City. The former classifies the service into broad divisions such as the clerical service, the medical service, and the inspection service; whereas the latter follows more restricted vocational lines such as bookkeeping, typing, nursing, and building inspection.

The Chicago type of classification has been adopted not only by the city of Chicago, but also by Oakland, Milwaukee City, Milwaukee County, Seattle, and the state of New Jersey. The classification prepared for the Dominion of Canada also is of the Chicago type. It is worthy of note, however, that in the later classifications of this type there is a decided leaning toward the more restricted service groupings of the New York type. This is evident from the fact that while the original Chicago classification divided the service into only eleven primary divisions, the classification of Milwaukee County provides for seventeen such divisions, that of the city of Milwaukee for nineteen divisions, and that of the Dominion of Canada for thirty-four divisions. Even the Canadian classification, however, differs fundamentally from the New York type which contains, for New York State, upwards of one hundred and fifty primary divisions of service.

Outside of New York City the New York type of classification has been used in the states of New York, Ohio, and Massachusetts; in the cities of St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Akron; and in Los Angeles County. It should be mentioned that the Los Angeles County and Pittsburgh classifications both preceded the classification of New York City and foreshadowed its character; but the conspicuous setting of the standardization work in the great metropolis, the clarity of its general plan, and the evident care that had been exercised in applying the vocational method of grouping positions, immediately gave the New York classification a prestige which the two earlier classifications have never had.

Since the classifications of the New York type follow along restricted vo-

cational lines, one might expect to find practically the same vocational groups in all of these classifications. Such, however, is not the case. An analysis, from which the classifications of the small municipal service of Akron has been excluded, shows that out of a total of 486 vocational groups in all of the remaining eight classifications only 128, or about 26 per cent, appear in more than one classification. Only 65, or about 13 per cent, appear in more than two classifications. Only 27, or about 5.5 per cent, appear in more than three classifications. Only 19, or less than 4 per cent, appear in more than four classifications. Only six vocational groups, those designated as "accountant," "forester," "pharmacist," "stenographer," "storekeeper," and "telephone operator," appear in six classifications; two groups, "bookkeeper" and "physician," appear in seven classifications; and "clerk" and "nurse" enjoy the exclusive distinction of appearing in all of the eight classifications.

The explanation of this lack of standardization within standardization measures themselves is not difficult to find. In the first place, governmental activities vary from city to city, from county to county, and from state to state. To illustrate, one city may do much of its own printing, whereas the other may have all its printing done by contract. The result would be that in the service classification of the first city there would appear a separate vocational group for printers, but in the classification of the second city no such group would appear. Again, in different governmental jurisdictions different methods of grouping similar employments have been used. St. Louis, for example, has classified chemists in a group by themselves, whereas New York State and New York City have placed both chemists and physicists in a single group. The state of Ohio has adopted still another method by bringing together in one vocational group not only chemists and physicists, but also bacteriologists and pathologists. In the third place, lack of standardization results from mere lack of a common nomenclature for like vocational groups. In one classification we find "electricians" and in another "electrical workers," not because of any substantial difference in the two groups, but simply because two different designations have been used for identical groups.

That greater uniformity could be achieved in civil service classifications even after all necessary variations are made to fit local conditions is quite obvious. It is possible, for example, to secure greater consistency in the grouping of related employments than we now have and yet not force upon any local service an arrangement that might prove arbitrary. Certainly where similar vocational groups are known by different designations, it would seem not only feasible but highly desirable to adopt standard designations. It is unlikely, however, that much headway will be made in this direction until we obtain some central clearing house for testing the different methods of classification and recommending as standard those which seem most meritorious. Here is an opportunity for the National Civil Service Reform League, the National Assembly of Civil Service Commissions, the Governmental Research Conference, or for all three of these organizations acting in unison. Already a notable beginning in this direction has been made by the National Assembly of Civil Service Commissions. In June, 1916, a special committee of that organization reported on certain fundamental principles that should govern the classification of positions in

the public service and, among other things, recommended that a standing committee be appointed "to work out an acceptable classification scheme." Thus far, however, this recommendation has not been carried into effect.

STANDARDIZATION OF DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

We may now make a cursory examination of two features of employment standardization which are very closely related, namely, the definitions of standard positions and the standard qualifications for appointment.

It is not within the scope of this discussion to comment on the suitability and correctness of the definitions and qualification statements in the various standardization measures, but attention should be called to a few matters of technical practice.

If one did not go back of the printed pages of the annual reports of the Chicago Civil Service Commission one would be left with the impression that the standardization measure of that city contained neither definitions of standard positions nor standard qualifications for appointment. These reports contain only definitions of "services" and "grades" but not of individual positions; and such statements of qualifications as may be discovered at all are most general in character and appear more or less incidentally in the grade definitions. The latter, too, are general rather than specific, and for a very good reason. A grade in the Chicago classification of service frequently includes a dozen or more distinct positions each involving a specialized set of duties and often belonging to a separate vocational line of work from other positions in the same grade. In grade I of the medical service, for example, Chicago has such widely differing positions as "orderly" and "interne." Under these circumstances the grade definitions had to be general in character, for any attempt to make them specific would have created difficulty in covering such a large number and variety of positions. As it is, the definitions are so very general that they have almost no practical value as standards for measuring work.

It is only by going behind the printed pages of the reports that the real character of this feature of Chicago's standardization plan may be ascertained. In the official files of the Civil Service Commission are cards for all the standard positions in the Chicago city service and on these cards appear not only specific definitions of the duties of the standard positions but also specific statements of the examination requirements to be met by applicants for appointment to these positions. The grade definitions appearing in the annual reports of the Chicago Commission are really superfluous timber and could be omitted entirely without detriment to the more essential features which do not appear in the reports. The important unit in employment standardization, after all, is the individual position and not the grade.

The grade definition, however, did not disappear immediately after Chicago's pioneer work. It was retained in the Oakland standardization of 1915. In the same year Los Angeles County, though it departed radically from Chicago's type of classification, did not cast overboard the idea of the general grade definition. Neither does its published classification of service contain any statements of appointment qualifications distinct from the general grade definitions. Pittsburgh, which followed closely upon the heels of Los Angeles County in its effort at standardization, continued the grade

definitions, but made them more specific and also included in its report statements of appointment qualifications applying to all positions in the grade. As late as 1917 Seattle, Washington, adopted a standardization plan which not only retained grade definitions but harked back to the very general type of definition first used by Chicago. In like manner it followed the example of Chicago's printed reports by omitting all mention of appointment qualifications.

In the standardization measures of New York City and New York State we find for the first time a distinct breaking away from the grade definition and the substitution of definitions of standard positions instead. These two measures which were worked out more or less simultaneously and under the guidance of the same organization, the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, may be said to mark a transitional stage in the development of this phase of technique; for while their departure from the grade definition was distinct yet it was by no means complete. In both measures there remain numerous instances of the use of definitions intended to cover all positions in a grade rather than just one position. In case of the qualifications for appointment we find a like tendency to break away from the grade as the unit of employment and to single out the standard position as the proper unit. It should be noted, however, that in the New York standardization reports there are many more survivals of qualification standards that apply to all positions in a grade than there are of grade definitions of duties.

The states of Ohio and Massachusetts and the city of Cleveland simply followed the New York model without making any contribution of importance to the technique of the work.

It remained for the city of Milwaukee to make the first complete break from the old grade definitions and grade qualification standards and to adopt a consistent policy of making the standard position the primary unit of employment for all purposes. In the standardization measure of that city every standard position is separately defined and is governed by a separate statement of appointment qualifications. The same practice has been followed by the state of New Jersey, the city of Akron, Milwaukee County, and the Dominion of Canada. The Canadian standardization, it should be added, is so emphatic in its recognition of the standard position as the primary unit of employment that it pays no attention whatever to grades as such. The report published by the Dominion government may be described as a dictionary in which the various standard positions are listed in alphabetical order.

STANDARDS OF COMPENSATION

Still another important item of interest is the practice of the different governments in regard to standards of compensation.

In general, two distinct standards have been used, the *market value* and the *cost of living*. The former has been used in practically all jurisdictions where employment standardization has been undertaken. In order to ascertain the market value of definite types of personal service, the rule has been to inquire into the rates of pay for similar employments in local private establishments and in other branches of the public service. For certain classes of skilled labor the union scale of wages has been accepted as the standard, notably in Chicago and Pittsburgh. It should be added, however, that where the market value has

been ascertained it has not been taken as an absolute standard but rather as a guide. Often it has been found that the conditions surrounding certain employments in the public service were so different from those surrounding analogous employments in private service that fairness required either a higher or a lower rate than the prevailing one.

In 1915 New York City established the precedent of making the cost of living a factor in wage determination. Like every other city of considerable size, New York had in its employ a large body of unskilled manual workers. When the Bureau of Standards came to the problem of setting the wage scale for this particular group, it realized the inequity of being guided solely by the wages prevailing in private employment regardless of their adequacy. Upon the theory that the city government should be a model employer, it was decided to inquire into the cost of living of unskilled laborers in the city of New York. The result of this inquiry was a brief report of 57 pages in which the conclusion was drawn that "below $840 a year an unskilled laborer's family of five cannot maintain a standard of living consistent with American ideas." The standard of living outlined in this report, it must be confessed, was too near the poverty level to be considered "consistent with American ideas," and the recommendation of the Bureau of Standards that $840 be made the *maximum* rate of pay for unskilled laborers, and attainable only after at least seven years of satisfactory service at lower rates, was hardly in keeping with the pronouncement that the city government should be a model employer; still the mere fact that the cost of living was taken into account at all marked a decided step in advance and gave to New York City a distinct place in the history of the standardization movement.

Two years later the Bureau of Personal Service, which succeeded the Bureau of Standards, repeated this inquiry and found that, due to higher prices, a minimum of $980 was necessary to provide the standard of living described in the original report.

A broader application of the cost of living principle, though from a different angle, was made in 1918 in Seattle. Unlike New York, that city did not attempt to establish a basic rate for unskilled laborers or for any other group of employes. It did, however, ascertain the increase in the cost of living in Seattle from 1915 to 1918 and then increased the compensation of salaried employes to a point where it was about 40 per cent higher than it was in 1915. While it is true that Seattle prices had gone up considerably more than 40 per cent during the period in question, yet the fact is to be noted that the adjustment in salaries was made with a definite relationship to the cost of living. Since this process brought Seattle salaries about 8 per cent above the 1918 salary rates as they were before the results of the study were applied, the wages of skilled and unskilled laborers also were advanced 8 per cent above the original 1918 rates, thus leaving the existing relativity of wages undisturbed.

The Canadian report on standardization embodies still another approach with regard to the cost of living. In this report it is frankly stated that the revised salaries should not be based upon actual living costs in 1918 which were considered abnormal and unstable, but upon "what would have been normal conditions for 1918 had the tendencies of the period prior to the war continued and had the war not occurred." For certain classes of positions a special war bonus was recom-

mended in addition to the regular salaries. As in Seattle, no effort was made to ascertain the cost of maintaining a given standard of living and thus establishing a basic rate for particular groups of employes.

Although the report of the Joint Congressional Commission on Reclassification of Salaries in the federal civil service is not yet available,[1] there should be some reference to the very fundamental approach which has been made to the problem of salary adjustment in the studies of this commission. Under its direction the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has made cost of living inquiries along three different lines. One inquiry resulted in the formulation of a "quantity and cost budget" for a government clerk's family of five persons and the demonstration that, at October, 1919 prices, such a family could not maintain itself in health and decency on less than $2,288 a year. A similar inquiry developed the fact that at September, 1919 prices, a single man employed as government clerk required a minimum income of $1,057 a year to maintain a corresponding standard of living. A third inquiry found that a single woman clerk must have at least $1,140 a year. With these three basic studies before it the Reclassification Commission was provided with a better fact basis for establishing equitable rates of pay for different classes of workers than any other public agency engaged in employment standardization has ever been.

A word ought to be said, too, with regard to the new undertaking in Philadelphia. While the official work of the Civil Service Commission of this city is as yet hardly under way, there will be available a local study of the cost of living for a workingman's family made by the Bureau of Municipal Research of Philadelphia.[2] This study, which was made during 1917 and 1918, outlines a standard of living expressed to a very large extent in terms of actual goods and services, so that its current cost may be readily ascertained at any time by simply revising the price figures appearing opposite the various items listed in the standard. It was found that the annual income required by a workingman's family of five persons at autumn 1918 prices was $1,636, and that at November, 1919 prices it was $1,803.

The range of compensation rather than the flat rate of pay has been made an essential feature of every standardization measure. Practically the only exceptions to this rule are found in the skilled and unskilled labor employments where the flat rate appeared to be more in conformity with the practice in private service.

ADVANCEMENT WITHIN COMPENSATION RANGES

Perhaps the most difficult problem in employment standardization is that of providing a fair and workable method of governing advancement from lower to higher rates of pay within a given range of compensation. It will be of especial interest therefore to see what has been the actual practice in this regard.

In the recommendations contained in the various reports on standardization, three different methods may be distinguished:

1. Automatic advancement at the end of a given period of time.

2. Advancement after a prescribed minimum period of service if warranted by the efficiency of the individual as

[1] This report has since been published as House Document No. 686, 66th Congress, 2d Session.

[2] "Workingmen's Standard of Living in Philadelphia," published by the Macmillan Company in October, 1919.

indicated by a system of efficiency records.

3. Advancement upon special appraisal indicating that the increase in salary is justified.

The first of these methods, that of automatic advancement at the end of a given period of time, has found favor in only one jurisdiction—Los Angeles County. Even there, however, its application is limited to the first increase in salary. A new appointee begins at the lowest rate and after one year of service he advances automatically to the next higher rate. Thereafter, however, advancement takes place only after investigation and favorable recommendation by the Bureau of Efficiency of the Civil Service Commission. The weakness of automatic advancement is that it does not discriminate between the less and the more efficient employes.

The second method is much more common. It has been recommended in practically every report on standardization that has appeared thus far. This does not mean that systems of efficiency records have been fully and successfully installed in all jurisdictions where they have been recommended. Far from it! As a matter of fact, according to fragmentary reports received by the writer, such systems have not been installed at all in Seattle or in Ohio; they have been only partially introduced in New York State and in St. Louis; and nowhere do they appear to have been really satisfactory. For a time the Chicago efficiency record system was heralded abroad as a most successful experiment, but it is no longer so regarded even in Chicago. One of the great difficulties everywhere seems to be to get administrative officials to take their duty of marking the efficiency of employes seriously enough. Too often this work has been done in a most perfunctory manner. Another difficulty is encountered in reconciling the markings of officials who mark according to widely varying standards; and a third difficulty lies in the fact that the personal bias of the administrator cannot be effectively eliminated from the markings without reducing their scope to a point of comparative uselessness.

In the writer's opinion the shortcomings of efficiency record systems are so great and in some respects so fundamental that the time, energy, and expense of further experimentation along this line might well be spared were it not for one fact of outstanding importance, and that is the lack of anything more satisfactory. It may be that some of the more recent innovations which place the operation of the system to a large extent under the control of the employes themselves will overcome in part at least the difficulties that stood in the way of the older plans. As yet, however, we have no positive evidence to that effect. The encouraging sign in this situation is that at the present time the whole problem of efficiency records is being approached with much greater care than it was a number of years ago. If there are real possibilities in the system we shall know it before very long; if the system has no possibilities we shall know this also.

The third method of governing advancement, that of special appraisal by a bureau of efficiency or similar administrative agency, has been recommended in New York City and New York State and is in effect in Los Angeles County, as we have already indicated. It should be explained that in both New York City and State this method is applied only to the higher grade positions. In Los Angeles County, as we have seen, it applies to all positions having a range of compensation, but is confined to the

second, and last, increase in pay in each position. This method must be considered as merely supplementary to other methods, for it is hardly conceivable that in a large service a separate appraisal of the work of every employe could be made every year by an overhead administrative agency.

CONCLUSION

After this somewhat cursory examination of the various standardization plans that have been worked out in different jurisdictions, it may not be wholly amiss to draw a few general conclusions.

In the first place there can be no question that very distinct gains in technique have been made during the last ten years. The later efforts at standardization, as a rule, have been far more scientific and more practicable than the earlier ones.

In the second place it must be frankly confessed that thus far we have not been able to meet squarely two highly important problems with which we have to deal in employment standardization. Most governments have hedged on the question of adequate compensation and none of them has yet proposed a satisfactory solution of the problem of controlling advancement in salary within a range of compensation.

In the third place there appears to be a great lack of standardization within the standardization measures themselves. This is true not only of the classifications of service but also of the grading schemes, the titles and the definitions of duties. We would reiterate, therefore, the suggestion that either the National Civil Service Reform League, the National Assembly of Civil Service Commissions, or the Governmental Research Conference, or any two or all of them acting in unison, establish some kind of central clearing house or bureau of standards for the purpose of testing out the various methods and ideas that have been advanced in the field of employment standardization and of recommending those which seem most meritorious. Without such a clearing house we shall continue to make confusion worse confounded, especially if every new consultant who appears upon the scene feels it encumbent upon himself to do something differently from the way it was done before whether his method is better or not. This is true particularly of nomenclature in which we already have a veritable babel of voices.

Finally, the warning should be sounded that merely to work out an excellent plan of standardization, or even to secure its adoption, does not solve all employment problems for all time. At best the plan merely makes for clarification and makes equitable employment administration possible. To maintain the plan in working order requires eternal vigilance, and to use it in the best interests of the service requires the most conscientious efforts of the broadest gauged men the community affords.

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